

ST. GERMANS
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S
REPORT.


1902.

J. BEDFORD KERSWILL, MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
ST. GERMANS DISTRICT COUNCIL,

GENTLEMEN,

IT is again my duty to submit to you my report as to the health and sanitary condition of my district during the past year, with the tables of the averages of the births and deaths at the various ages for the whole district, and also for the three registration divisions.

The district consists of an area of 41,712 acres, and a population on the census of 1901 of 18,509. The number of inhabited houses being 3,156, making the average number of persons per house 5·8.

The estimated population to the middle of 1902, calculated by the natural increase, was 18,613, and the number of inhabited houses 3,211, making the average number of persons per house 5·4.

During the year 1902 the number of births registered in the whole district was 411 making the birth-rate 22·20 per thousand, as against 396 births in 1901 with a rate of 21·39 per thousand.

The total number of deaths from all causes was 238, giving a death-rate of 12·85 per thousand, as against 243 in the preceding year with a rate of 13·12 per thousand.

Of these, 43 were among children under one year of age, giving a death-rate of 2·32 per thousand as against 51 in the preceding year with a rate of 2·75 per thousand.

Thirteen deaths were due to zymotic diseases; viz:—eight from whooping cough, three from diarrhœa, one from measles, and one from diphtheria, giving a death-rate from these causes of ·70 per thousand.

One only of the above deaths being included in the schedule of notifiable diseases.

Ninety-seven were of the age of 65 years and upwards; of these eighteen occurred at the age of 75 to 80; thirty-eight from 80 to 90; and four upwards of 90; being a very large proportion of deaths due to old age.

Fourteen deaths were recorded as being due to cancer, giving a death-rate from this disease of $\cdot 78$ per thousand; eleven of the number occurring in the South Registration District.

Thirteen deaths were due to phthisis, making the death-rate from this disease $\cdot 70$ per thousand; one occurring in the St Germans, nine in the South, and three in the North Registration District.

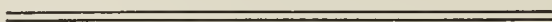
There were forty-three cases of infectious diseases notified during the year, viz:—

Erysipelas	...	20
Scarlet Fever	...	11
Typhoid Fever	...	6
Diphtheria	...	5
Puerperal Fever	...	1

giving a disease rate of notified cases of $2\cdot 32$ per thousand, as against $2\cdot 2$ per thousand in the year preceding. The slight increase being mainly due to a greater number of cases of erysipelas being notified.

It is satisfactory to note that the number of cases of typhoid fever has been greatly reduced, viz—from nineteen cases with 2 deaths in 1901, to six cases in 1902 without a death.

Vaccination has been most efficiently carried out during the year throughout the district. There have been no prosecutions for refusals—and a large number of adults and children over ten years of age have been re-vaccinated.



In the St. Germans registration district there have been 52 births registered, giving a birth-rate of $19\cdot 95$ per thousand, as against a rate of $19\cdot 18$ per thousand in 1901.

Thirty-three deaths were recorded from all causes, making a death-rate of $12\cdot 66$ per thousand as against $14\cdot 1$ in the preceding year. Of these, 9 occurred under one year old, making a death-rate of $3\cdot 4$ per thousand, the same as the year before, eleven occurred at the age of 65 and upwards, one being between 75 and 80; and six at the age of 80 and upwards.

One death was recorded as being due to zymotic disease, viz:—diarrhœa, giving a death-rate of $\cdot 38$ per thousand, the same as the year preceding.

Eleven cases of infectious diseases were notified, viz:

Scarlet Fever	...	6
Erysipelas	...	5

making the disease rate $4\cdot 33$ per thousand, as against $5\cdot 3$ per thousand in 1901.

Of the six cases of scarlet fever, the first occurred in St. Germans village, the fourth week in January, and was evidently contracted in a neighbouring district. Almost simultaneously a case occurred at Tideford Cross which I considered was contracted at Tideford, where there were some scattered cases in November and December, 1901. The remaining cases were traceable to the same source of infection.

During the first week in February an out-break of chicken pox occurred among the children attending the girls and infants' school at St. Germans, which materially affected the attendance, but it was not, in my opinion, necessary to advise the District Council to have the school closed. All the children suffering from the disease were excluded from the school until all risk of infection was past.

In October, an outbreak of whooping cough occurred in the neighbourhood of East Lodge, affecting a large number of the children attending that school, in consequence of which the school was closed from October 18th to November 10th.

The grave-yard at Tideford being situated at the head of the village, and at such a much higher level than all the wells supplying the village, I considered it advisable to have the water from the nearest well analysed; the result of the analysis was satisfactory, there being no sign of pollution, and as the stratum of the rock is almost perpendicular, there is little fear of contamination of those at a greater distance.

The better distribution of the water supply for the village, and the drainage demands your attention.

At Trerule Foot a great nuisance was caused by a number of pigs being kept in a yard abutting the highway; this has been temporarily abated, but a definite understanding should be made between the Sanitary Authority and the Landlord or Tenant, that there should be no recurrence of the nuisance which is injurious to the health of those occupying the houses adjoining. The well supplying two cottages is liable to pollution from a stagnant pool in an adjoining field which serves for watering cattle; this should be filled up and a cattle trough fixed in its place.

The two cottages at Branchicombe mentioned in my report for 1899 have been made into one, making a suitable dwelling for a family; the necessary closet accommodation has also been provided, but still there is no supply of drinking water nearer than Polbathick, a distance of about a quarter of a mile.

Arrangements have now been made to fill in a portion of the head of Polbathick lake, to improve the drainage of that portion of the village which has so long been a source of danger. I hope the work will be carried out without further delay.

No steps have been taken to improve the drainage of Kellow Park, Polbathick, or to secure a supply of water for the East end of the village, where there are eleven houses without any supply within a reasonable distance.

A public urinal and closets are much needed at Downterry, where there are so many visitors during the Spring and Summer.

At Crafhole, the drains from two cottages on the South side of the main road have been connected with the main drain, which has done away with a nuisance for some time complained of.

The improvement of the water supply of SheviocK village is still in abeyance.

In the South registration district there were 256 births, making a birth-rate of 22·58 per thousand, as against 223 births in 1901, with a rate of 19·67 per thousand.

139 deaths were registered, shewing a death-rate of 12·26 per thousand, being the same as in the preceding year.

Twenty-two deaths occurred among children under one year of age, making a death-rate of 1·94 per thousand, as against 2·47 in 1901. The causes attributed were 6 from bronchitis, 3 pneumonia, 2 diarrhœa, 2 whooping cough, 3 convulsions, 1 premature birth, 1 gastritis, 1 peritonitis, 1 congestion of brain, and 3 debility.

Fifty-five were recorded at the age of 65 and upwards. Of these 13 were between 75 and 80: 21 between 80 and 90; and 2 upwards of 90.

Seven deaths were due to zymotic diseases, viz:

Whooping Cough	...	4
Diarrhœa	...	2
Scarlet Fever	...	1

making a death-rate of ·61 per thousand, as against 1·23 in the year preceding.

Twenty-five cases of infectious diseases were notified, viz:

Erysipelas	...	11
Typhoid Fever	...	5
Diphtheria	...	4
Scarlet Fever	...	4
Puerperal Fever	..	1

making a disease rate of 2·20 per thousand, as against 1·94 in 1901.

Although there is a very slight increase in the number of cases notified, it is most satisfactory to note that the number of cases of TYPHOID FEVER have decreased from 15 to 5.

Of the cases of typhoid fever the first case was reported at Kingsand, at the end of January, the patient had only just arrived from St. Helena, and consequently must have contracted the disease there, or at some port of call on the voyage.

The second case occurred in February at Merifield, near Torpoint, and was undoubtedly traceable to the use of polluted water.

The third case was towards the end of February at Millbrook, and could be traced to defective drains.

The fourth case was also due to defective drains, occurring at Gordon Terrace, Torpoint, in May.

The fifth case also occurred in May, at Antony village, which may have been caused by the leakage from a drain at the back of the adjoining house, causing a very bad smell and dampness in the wash house, or from the sewer gas emitted from a manhole in the village sewer situated near the part of the house, there being no means of flushing the sewer excepting by hand, which appears to have been done only on washing days with the soapy water. In all the foregoing cases the faults have as far as possible been remedied.

The four cases of diphtheria all occurred in Torpoint, in July, September, and October, and could all be traced more or less definitely to defects in drains.

Two out of the four cases of scarlet fever occurred at Torpoint in November. In both cases the disease was contracted elsewhere, and in no way connected with one another:

The other two were also imported cases, one being at Millbrook in November; the other at Kingsand in December.

Every precaution was taken in each case, with the result that the disease did not spread in either place.

In October, an epidemic of measles occurred at Antony, St. Johns, and Tregantle, affecting fifty-eight children mostly attending Antony school; in consequence of which the school was closed from October 18th, until November 10th.

In consequence of the case of typhoid fever at Merifield, I made a careful inspection, and found besides some defects in drainage which were at once remedied, that the family had been using water from a well which was condemned in 1893 in consequence of pollution and was at that time closed, another well being sunk some distance away, which has been used by the different occupants up to the present time. The water from both these wells was analysed, and condemned as being unfit for domestic use.

Another well was then sunk at a distance of about 250 feet further South.

At a depth of 10 feet a good spring was found in fairly solid rock rising vertically, yielding a large quantity of water, the stratum running almost due East and West. This was, on analysis, found to be polluted, and condemned as being unfit for use, as also were two other wells supplying the adjoining houses. Therefore, the occupiers of five houses are now dependent for their supply of water from the well at Antony Lodge which was only provided for, and intended for the requirements of one household.

The rapid increase in the population of Torpoint, and the proposed Naval Establishment at Trevol, necessitates a much larger supply for the neighbourhood and the scheme proposed by the engineer consulted, will, if carried out, enable the District Council to supply other places in the neighbourhood including Merifield and Antony village, both of which places are so much in need of water.

At numbers 67 and 68, Fore Street, Torpoint, there is one well for the two houses—a pump being fixed only at 67—at 68 the water is dipped up in a bucket, which is in all cases a most objectionable practice. As all wells in a town must be more or less liable to pollution, the landlord should be required to close this well and take in the public supply.

The drainage of Montpelier has been for a long time most unsanitary, and it is essential that the work of connecting the house drains with the sewer should be completed without any further delay.

A Local Government Board enquiry was held at Torpoint, in April, by M. K. North, Esq, M.I.C.E., in connection with the extension of sewerage required.

The head of the Millbrook creek is being gradually filled up, which when completed will be a great improvement to the sanitary condition of that part of the village.

A house in Back Street, Millbrook, has been condemned as unfit for habitation.

A Local Government Board enquiry was held at Kingsand, in February, by Col. W. Langdon Coke, M.I.C.E., with regard to the increased water supply for the village, and in October a good supply of water was taken in from Sandway valley, and is, so far, very satisfactory.

Twenty-six houses in Kingsand and Cawsand are still without any closet accommodation; eleven being in Cawsand, viz: 1 in Duck Street, 1 in Back Street, 3 in The Square, and 6 in Garrett Street.

To provide closets for the houses in Garrett Street, a new out-fall would have to be provided, which would also serve for other houses and the school.

The pipe from the school lavatory which at present runs horizontally along the outside of the building and nearly its whole length, is defective, leaking at several points. This together with the throwing of excrement on to the beach, from the houses that are without closets, is a great source of nuisance, and should be remedied without delay. This might be done at comparatively little cost, by providing the additional out-fall.

There are two houses in Back Street with pail closets at the top of the garden in a most inaccessible place, the steps leading up to them being in a dangerous condition. There is ample space in both cases for water closets, and a drain is already laid.

The remaining fifteen are in Kingsand, viz.—3 on the Cleave, 8 in Market Street, 1 in Fore Street, and 2 on the Green. In Market Street and on the Cleave some structural changes would be required in the houses, but in Fore Street and on the Green there is ample space in the gardens. No additional sewer would be required. The curbing throughout the main street in Cawsand should be completed.

In the North registration district 103 births were registered, making a birth rate of 22·53 per thousand as against 26·90 in 1901.

Sixty-six deaths were registered, giving a death-rate of 14·43, as against 14·65 in the year preceding.

Of these 12 were under one year of age, viz :

Premature birth ...	1
Pneumonia ...	1
Bronchitis ...	2
Whooping cough	3
Other causes ...	5

making the death-rate among children under one year old 2·61 per thousand, as against 3·06 in 1901.

Thirty-one deaths were at the age of 65 and upwards, four being between 75 and 80, eleven between 80 and 90, and two over 90, shewing that a very large proportion of the deaths were due to age.

Five cases were recorded as being due to zymotic diseases, viz:—

Whooping cough	4
Diphtheria ...	1

making a death-rate of 1·09 per thousand, as against ·87 in 1901.

Seven cases of infectious diseases were notified, viz:—

Erysipelas ...	4
Scarlet fever ...	1
Diphtheria ...	1
Typhoid fever ...	1

The case of scarlet fever occurred at the end of March, and was an isolated one; the source of infection was unable to be traced.

The case of diphtheria was also an isolated one, in a detached farm cottage.

The typhoid fever occurred in a servant who was sent home ill from the town.

In June, July, and August, whooping cough was very prevalent at Burraton, Burraton Coombe, and Pill, affecting a large number of children attending the girls' and infants' school at St. Stephens, in consequence of which all the affected children had to be excluded from the school.

The water supply of the village of St. Mellion, which I called your attention to in my last Annual Report, has been to a certain extent dealt with during the year, and although it is not yet quite satisfactory, little more can be done until an entirely fresh and independent supply is secured.

The water from four wells was analysed, two of which were pronounced to be unsafe, and one of doubtful purity. These three wells are all on the East side of the road, and are within about 120 feet of privies; consequently the pollution which has taken place will in all probability increase.

The water from the well on the other side of the road, further away from the houses, and other sources of pollution, and evidently in another stratum, was after analysis pronounced it be good and suitable for drinking and other domestic purposes. This well has been deepened to about 30 feet for greater storage, and there is a considerable increase in the supply. Two pumps have been fixed here, and this is now the main supply for the village.

In my last year's report I called your attention to a very serious nuisance caused by the drainage of five houses in Brookdown Villas, St. Stephens, which drained into a common cess pit at the back, and within about 25 yards from the houses in Tamar terrace. The covering of this cesspit has for some time past been broken in, and a small over-flow pit, which was dug a few feet below, soon fills and has to be dipped out every day. No steps have been taken to abate this nuisance which is dangerous to the health of the inhabitants, and I am informed that no action is likely to be taken in the matter until the summer. Whether this delay is on account of the expense, or of any difficulty arising between the Landlords of Brookdown Villas and the land between the houses and the sewer, which is already laid within a reasonable distance, I do not know; but I must urge the Sanitary Authority to take immediate action in the matter.

In accordance with a request from the District Council, I inspected a house and premises at Pill, occupied by Mr. Elford. I found a pail closet at the back of the house, which was emptied as required, and deposited in a small hole in the garden about 50 feet from the Adit, the water from which is used as a supplemental supply for Saltash. At the side door of the house there is a sink for soapy water and other refuse slops, connected with an old wall drain running across the road. Both of these I consider to be a direct source of danger to the water in the adit. To obviate any possibility of pollution of the water, a well and carefully laid drain with properly glazed pipes and securely cemented joints, should be constructed. This should be carried to such a distance from the out-flow of the adit, into a well built cess pit, properly ventilated, and in such a position where there could be no possibility of any soakage flowing backwards towards the adit.

In June, I inspected a dairy at Warfelton, which had recently been altered in accordance with the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Order. I found it clean and well ventilated, Being doubtful about the water from a well near the house, which was often, though not

always used, there being another supply available for the greater part of the year, I advised that a sample should be submitted for analysis. The result was not altogether satisfactory: the Public Analyst remarking that "it should be filtered before using for drinking or culinary purposes to remove the finely divided suspended matter present. Moreover it contains a little lead in solution, which being a cumulative poison, is most objectionable. An examination of the sediment disclosed the presence of particles of metallic lead amounting to 1.32 grains per gallon; these are probably filings from a lead pipe."

The well being adjoining the road, I advised that it should be properly secured, that the lead pipe from the pump be removed, the well thoroughly cleaned, and an iron pipe substituted for the lead one. The landlord has assured me that the water from this well shall not be used without the necessary precautions being taken.

At Albert Terrace, Burraton, consisting of twelve houses, the water supply is obtained from wells sunk in the gardens at the back, within a very short distance of the closets which formerly drained into a cess pit at the West end of the terrace. When these closets were connected with the sewer, the water became, for a time foul and offensive; I therefore advised that samples from the different wells should be submitted for analysis.

The one supplying the first block of four houses, nearest the cess pit, was pronounced to be dangerous for drinking.

The other two pointed to past pollution, and though at the time good for drinking purposes, the surroundings should be carefully noticed, and any chance of a recurrence of contamination prevented. Under these circumstances the owners should be required to take in the public water supply, which is within a few feet, and to discontinue the use of the wells.

There are ten or twelve houses in Lower Burraton, where the closets are in a bad and offensive condition. These should be connected with the sewer without delay.

The sewerage and outfall works of St. Stephens parish have been completed.

The amount of storm water has been causing some difficulty in filling and running through the filter beds so rapidly as to materially interfere with the efficient filtration of the sewage.

Some chemical precipitant such as alumino-ferric should be regularly used.

The drainage and water supply of Forder is still in abeyance, but they both require attention.

The landing of Town soil in the South side of the creek at Coombe is constantly complained of by the inhabitants in the Saltash urban district, and as yet no definite steps have been taken by either the St. Germans rural, or the Saltash urban district, to prevent the constant recurrence of an undoubted nuisance which must be injurious to the health of those living near.

The closet accommodation at Trehunest has not yet received your attention.

Sixteen samples of water have been submitted for analysis; nine of which were pronounced as being unfit for domestic purposes.

One hundred and ninety cases of nuisances of various kinds have been abated, after notice given by the Sanitary Inspector.

Three outbreaks of anthrax have occurred. One at Carbeal, Antony, resulting in the death

of one cow, one at Bake, St. Germans, one bullock dying, and one at Penhale, St. Johns, where 4 pigs, 1 sheep, and 1 dog died. The usual precautions were taken, by burying the carcasses, and disinfecting the premises, with the result that the disease did not spread in either place.

In March I was requested to confer with the Medical Officer of Health of Plymouth with regard to the admission of cases of small pox 'should any occur in this district' on board the Hospital Ship belonging to that authority.

I give the answer I received from the Medical Officer of Health of Plymouth in full.

"Your letter in reference to receiving cases of small pox that might occur in your district was laid before the Sanitary Committee of the Plymouth Borough Council at their meeting of the 27th March last, but a resolution stands on the books of the Corporation to the effect that no case of small pox from any district whatever be received for isolation on board the Hospital Ship "Maud."

At a meeting of the Port Sanitary Authority to-day (May 2nd), the first since the receipt of your letter, I placed the matter before their committee. They are unable to grant your request."

It will therefore be necessary to erect a temporary hospital if any cases should occur in the district.

The other parts of the district have been generally healthy, and free from any epidemics, and require no special comment.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

J. BEDFORD KERSWILL,

Medical Officer of Health.

ST. GERMAN'S,

January, 1903.

